



SOUTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Data Analysis and Planning Protocol

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This fifteen-minute protocol is designed to help an educator or team of educators at any level – classroom, school, or district – describe, analyze, plan action, and evaluate results of that action in relation to a specific set of data.

Ground Rules for Use of Protocol

There are seven ground rules users should follow in order for this protocol to be effective.

1. Focus on one set of data for the protocol, though you may consider supporting your analyses and planning with related data.
2. Be prepared to give the protocol and the data you are using a minimum of fifteen minutes of your undivided attention. During the initial ten minutes, the user should work individually answering questions in steps 1 through 4 (except Step 2, Question 4) without consultation or interaction.
3. You must have a thought partner to complete this protocol (see Step 2, Question 4). After a minimum of ten minutes of individual work and reflection on steps 1 through 4, discuss your understanding of the data and your plan with your thought partner to gauge if he/she believes your thinking reflects alignment with the data and a reasonable plan of action. Be prepared to spend five minutes at minimum on the discussion with your thought partner. Initially, to encourage dialogue and reduce anxiety, you are encouraged to use this protocol with one thought partner. However, especially after some initial practice in groups of two, the protocol can be used easily in a larger group of thought partners. In that case, more time should be expected for discussion.
4. The protocol is most effective when thought partners are in like roles or the discussion is peer-to-peer. If used between a supervisor and supervisee, please keep in mind that the goal of the protocol is to inform thinking and action, not evaluation or positional authority.
5. The protocol questions are intended to be used as a worksheet during the minimum of ten minutes of individual work. Some kind of writing – either electronically on the digital form of this protocol or handwritten on a hard copy – is expected and will facilitate thinking and reflection later on.
6. When using the protocol and analyzing your data set, avoid the tendency to justify, explain, or make assumptions about what has caused particular patterns in the data, especially when it comes to students or their parents. Focus on your agency in analysis and planning.
7. In Step 4, focus your planning and evaluation of any changed instruction, procedures, or systems within ninety days. This will help you evaluate any results and make any further changes, in necessary, within a reasonable amount of time.

Step 1: Describe the Data

Directions: In this stage, describe the data set using the following questions.

1. What data are provided?
2. To whom would the data be most relevant and/or informative? Why?
3. What questions do users have or need to address with these data?

Step 2: Analyze the Data

Directions: First, based on your questions and what you need to know, decide what type of analysis is most relevant (item analysis, subgroup comparison, comparison with goal/target, growth, etc.). Second, use that method to analyze the data. Finally, look critically at your analysis and answer the following questions. Note that the involvement of a thought partner or partner(s) will be critical after your analysis to validate your understanding of the data.

1. What patterns are evident, both positive and negative?
2. What might the root causes be of the patterns you see?
3. How do other data sources inform the patterns and root causes you have identified?
4. Work with a thought partner. Can he/she validate your understanding of the data?

Step 3: Inform Your Action

Directions: Once you have an understanding of what the data show and root causes that are likely to be involved, consider how the data should inform your current action with the questions below.

1. Based on your understanding of the data, should current action change or stay the same? Why?
2. If change is needed, what is your goal with the change? How will you assess that the change is effective within ninety days?

Note: If change is needed, please complete Step 4. If no change is warranted, your work with this set of data is concluded.

Step 4: Plan (If Needed)

Directions: Based on your understanding and if change is needed, plan actionable next steps within the next thirty, sixty, and/or (at most) ninety days. This step in the protocol should not be completed if no action is necessary. If a change is warranted and this step is necessary, be sure to plan your next steps clearly, limit the number of tasks (given the timeline), and assign responsibility for those tasks.

What?	Who?	When?

Step 5: Evaluate (If Needed)

Directions: After completion of any planned next steps, consider results. This step in the protocol should not be completed if no action was taken.

1. Has your change been effective? How do you know?

Note: If your plan has been effective, you should be back on track with long-term goals. If not, reexamine your analysis, understanding of root causes, and/or action steps with a different thought partner.